

For immediate release
December 29, 2004

RIO GRANDE FLOOD CONTROL, ARROYO COLORADO, BROWNSVILLE-MATAMOROS WEIR ON AGENDA FOR JANUARY 12 PUBLIC MEETING

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) has scheduled a public meeting of its Lower Rio Grande Citizens' Forum (LRGCF) on January 12 at 4:00 p.m. in the Hoblitzelle Auditorium of the Texas A & M Agricultural Research and Extension Center, 2415 E. Highway 83 in Weslaco, Texas. The purpose of the LRGCF is to facilitate the exchange of information between the USIBWC and members of the public about Commission activities in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

USIBWC Environmental Engineer Sylvia Waggoner will provide an update on efforts to assess the flood control levees in the Lower Rio Grande. The USIBWC recently tested the Retamal Dike, a section of levee south of Donna, Texas, after initial investigations suggested that clay used to construct the dike had dried out and might allow seepage of floodwaters. The evaluation, which used water to simulate the pressure effect of flood flows on the levee, found that the levee performed as intended without any problems. Investigators determined that recent rainfall had rehydrated the clay, effectively sealing any cracks.

Waggoner will also address Brownsville-Matamoros Weir discussions with Mexico. The proposed weir across the Rio Grande would raise the water level and create a water supply pool for both countries. The USIBWC is working with the initial project proponent, the Brownsville Public Utilities Board, to coordinate the weir with Mexico and to develop it as a binational initiative.

In another agenda item, Laura De La Garza, Watershed Coordinator for the Arroyo Colorado, will discuss a Watershed Protection Plan for the arroyo. The Arroyo Colorado has consistently failed to meet water quality standards for its designated uses as established by the State of Texas. Because of this, the State is mandated by the federal government under the Clean Water Act to take action to improve water quality. One component of this effort is development of a Watershed Protection Plan. Stakeholders, including farmers, municipalities, anglers, bird watchers, and others are encouraged to get involved in the process of preparing the plan. De La Garza will outline the evolution of the effort to write the Watershed Protection Plan, the structure of the group of individuals working on the effort, and the progress to date. A draft plan is due by December 2005.

A complete meeting agenda appears below. Members of the public who would like more information can contact the USIBWC's Lower Rio Grande Project Office at (956) 565-3150 or Public Affairs Officer Sally Spener at (915) 832-4175 or sallyspener@ibwc.state.gov.

For more information:

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LOWER RIO GRANDE CITIZENS' FORUM
Wednesday, January 12, 2005
4:00 - 6:00 P.M.
Hoblitzelle Auditorium
Texas A & M Agricultural Research and Extension Center
2415 E. Highway 83
Weslaco, Texas

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions - Forum Board Co-Chair Sylvia Waggoner, Environmental Engineer, USIBWC
- A Watershed Protection Plan for the Arroyo Colorado - Laura De La Garza, Watershed Coordinator for the Arroyo Colorado
- Retamal Dike Levee Evaluation - Sylvia Waggoner, Environmental Engineer, USIBWC
- Brownsville-Matamoros Weir Discussions with Mexico - Sylvia Waggoner, Environmental Engineer, USIBWC
- Public Comment
- Board Discussion, Suggested Future Agenda Items

If you have a disability that you wish to self-identify confidentially that requires accommodation, please advise us ahead of time.

For more information, call 956-565-3150 or e-mail sallyspener@ibwc.state.gov.